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A
Big Brother
Investment

F. H. Cheley

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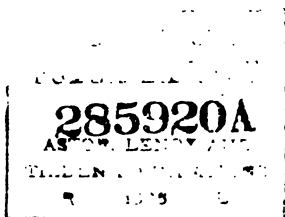
F. H. CHELEY

*Author of "The Adventure of a Prodigal Father,"
"Told by the Camp Fire," "Camp and
Outing Activities," etc.*

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M.S.M.



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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO MY
MOTHER

"Youth needs the influence of the confidence of others. Many men have become noble and great because of the influence of a mother's faith in them."

FOREWORD

This little story was first printed serially in the *American Motherhood Magazine*, and is reprinted here by permission. Its whole purpose is to plead for a bigger and more intelligent understanding of the much misunderstood boy.

Most boys are what you expect them to be, yet many a down-and-out lad has "come back" into a life of real usefulness simply because some man has believed in and been a Big Brother to him.

The work of the Big Brother Movement is yet in its infancy, but thousands of cases already on record show it to be a success. If this little story of true life leads some virile man to become a Big Brother to one needy boy, it will have accomplished its full purpose.

F. H. C.

St. Louis, 1917.

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I

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS

I

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS

Herbert Hudson rose hurriedly from the breakfast table and, taking his coat from the hook, was just opening the door to go out when his mother entered through the woodshed door, a bundle of dusty papers in one hand and a few bits of kindling in the other. The boy had heard her tidying up the summer kitchen and had swallowed his breakfast in haste to get away before her return.

"Herbert, I want you to help me clean the woodshed after school tonight, ready for the winter's wood. You know it is to come this week and we must arrange for it. It does beat all how much trash collects in that shed through the summer. Why,

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it seems to me there is enough trash out there—”

Herbert exploded, something he had been doing very often of late, and usually with just about as much provocation as in this instance.

“O, thunder! Mother, what’s your hurry about the wood? You’d think to hear you talk that that wood was gold and had to be taken as good care of. There’s no peace for a fellow anyway, any more. It’s wood, or coal, or ashes, or something else from morning till night.” He stopped for more breath, while his mother stepped back, as if something had struck her in the face. Such talk was so unlike the Herbert of old, and so unoccasioned.

“But, Herbert—” she got no farther.

“It seems you’ve got to be digging around somewhere in unheard-of places or you aren’t happy, anyway. I’ve got to go to school. I’ve got no time to monkey with woodsheds.”

He slammed the door behind him and was gone.

Mrs. Hudson stood staring, indignation written on every feature. But, motherlike, the indignation soon slipped away and in its place came a little cry as if something had suddenly hurt her.

"O, Herbert! Herbert!" Then she dropped into a chair and cried it out all alone. The burst of grief over, Mrs. Hudson busied herself about the kitchen, completely absorbed in thought. Herbert was her oldest boy and until very recently had been an obedient, courteous lad. Mrs. Hudson had noted for some time past a rebellious spirit, and also that the boy seemed worried and did not eat as was his hearty custom. She realized that slowly yet surely the old spirit of companionship and mutual trust that she had enjoyed since his tiny boyhood was slipping away. He no longer came

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to her for petty advice or shared with her his dreams. When he did come it was always with a request for money, and at such times as she had refused him he had suddenly burst forth in a terrible temper and gone away in a wild state of excitement.

She thought it over carefully. She reasoned with herself until she could get no farther. "I wonder why he was so indignant at me for rummaging around in the woodshed," she mused. "I wonder if he *could* have—" but she shuddered at the very thought. It could not be so.

She had tried to forget the little incident of several weeks before, but now it seemed to be in her every thought and she could not put it away. Yes, he had told her himself that it was stolen candy, but he had declared that he had had no part in the stealing; that Jim Morton and Rolly Burns had given it to him,

and he had been ashamed to eat it, so had hidden it there in the woodshed. She remembered how she had taken it, box and all, and placed it in the fire and then had forbidden Jim or Rolly to come to the house again. Yet what had that to do with this incident?

She glanced at the woodshed door and stood irresolute. Then she hurried across the room, flung wide the door and glanced about her, as if to make sure no one was watching. She began to explore this corner, and examine that, to investigate the contents of box and package, and finally to run her hands through the pockets of the two old coats that hung on the peg. All the while she was repeating over and over, as if she needed to say it aloud to keep herself fully persuaded, "He's *not* a thief! Oh, I'm *sure* my boy is not a thief!"

She trembled, her heart was ham-

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mering painfully, and beads of perspiration stood upon her excited face. Yet she worked on swiftly, almost eagerly to the end. She had looked in every corner and had found no trace of anything irregular. She was ashamed of herself for even letting the hateful thought in.

Almost at the kitchen door, with a heart relieved, she caught sight of a bright edge of plaid on the topmost shelf above her head. She had never seen that before. In a second she was dragging out the step-ladder—old, rickety, and rotten from age. Up she went, to within reach of the top shelf. There, carefully hidden under an old blanket, was a tennis racket of the latest design, encased in a plaid waterproof case, and with the words across the handle in bold letters, "Property of D. M." With trembling hands she drew it from the case and looked at it. "Spaulding Special \$9.00"

was stamped in gold upon the frame. She could hardly steady herself on the ladder. Then it was true after all, the racket was stolen, and her boy—

“Perhaps there is some other explanation. Oh, there must be!” she sobbed, as she placed the tennis racket out of sight in the pantry. Then, taking the bread from the pan, she floured the end of the kitchen table and began to knead the bread vigorously, thinking with every punch of the dough just how she could best broach the whole matter to Herbert. She was not afraid to do her duty, no matter how difficult it might be. But experience had taught her many things about boys that are not written in books, and she knew that the success of her talk with him would depend very largely on how tactfully she could broach the matter. She was so engaged when the telephone rang. It was with a feeling

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of apprehension that she called as pleasant a "hello" as her voice could manage.

As she listened, her figure drooped and a dread came into her eyes. "I'll look into the matter at once, Mr. Spear," she said, when the message was given, "and call you." She stood irresolute, the receiver still in her hand. The message had merely confirmed her suspicion that Herbert had not been in school for more than a week, and that he was at that very hour playing truant.

"The boy needs a man's hand," she said, miserably. "It's a great pity for a growing boy not to have a father, but—to whom can I go?" A great wave of loneliness and fear swept over her, and she suddenly felt herself totally inadequate for the task that she knew lay before her.

She stood wrapped in thought for some seconds, when suddenly she cried, "I'll go to Mr. Bates at the

Young Men's Christian Association. He will help me, I am sure."

At the Association on that very morning trouble had been brewing also.

"What's the matter now, Cover?" asked Mr. Bates, as the Physical Director came into his office and seated himself with a sigh.

"More stealing again, Bates. I thought we had that sort of business cleared up when we caught the last boy, but Donald Murphy lost a splendid new tennis racket Saturday evening—laid it down to go and comb his hair and when he came back it was gone. Donald says some small lad told him Herbert Hudson took it, but that doesn't seem possible. Herbert has such a good home and his mother is such a splendid woman, and he has always been a fine boy until just lately."

"I know that, Cover, and yet Herbert hasn't been near here since

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Saturday, and he is usually in the building every day. He hasn't been traveling with the best of boys of late, either. He's growing fast—too fast for safety, and you know what strange things youth brings sometimes. Yet I never thought he would steal."

Thirty minutes later Mr. Bates was hurrying down the street, when whom should he see but Herbert, gazing idly into a store window and eating candy from a good-sized bag. He mentally noted the tall, slender figure, the growth of fuzz on the lips and chin, and a moment later the harsh notes of a changing voice.

"Hello, Herb! Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"Why—I've been pretty busy at school—" Herbert began a brave bluff, but avoided the other man's eyes, and attempted to turn away with some indistinct excuse. Mr. Bates, however, had no intention

of letting him escape. "Better get around to the gym, old man. You're growing pretty fast and you ought to have regular exercise."

"I—I'll be around in a day or two. I—I don't care much about gym any more. I'm getting so big and clumsy everybody gives me the ha-ha." Herbert was noticeably uncomfortable. His face was flushed and he shifted about, longing to get away and yet not quite daring to go. Mr. Bates made no reference to the fact that he ought to be in school. Instead he laughed, and gave the boy a friendly slap.

"You come on," he said. "Laughing at you won't hurt you any, and the gym'll do you good. See you tonight?"

"Maybe," Herbert replied, stammering and shifting his eyes, "that is—if—if I'm here."

Mr. Bates had turned to go, but this last remark halted him.

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"Thinking of going away?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Why—I—a—a fellow asked me to go to Denver with him. I hate this town." He was forgetting caution now in a burst of boyish spleen. "I can't hardly stand it sometimes. Seems I'm always getting in bad lately." He turned away his face, but not before the older man had seen genuine anguish upon it.

"O, I guess you're looking at it wrong," Mr. Bates replied cheerfully. "You come in and let's talk it over. I've been to Denver myself and maybe I can give you some pointers."

Herbert made no promise, but turned away, obviously relieved to close the interview, and Mr. Bates went his way.

"Too bad," he said to himself. "That boy's trying to run away from himself. He doesn't know that if he gets in bad in one place he will

in another. I'll try to talk him around. It's hard on a chap not to have a father."

At supper time Mrs. Hudson said nothing to Herbert about the tennis racket. She had not yet decided upon the manner of approach. After supper Herbert went out as usual. Later in the evening the mother sat rocking in her chair by the table, her sewing lying idly in her lap. She was thinking of the night Herbert was born and of how near she had come to the "Valley of the Shadow" in order that he might have life. She thought of the sacrifices which she and his dead father had made, that Herbert might go dressed as well as other boys and have the same opportunities and chances. She thought of all the little confidences they had had together, of the surprises for Dad at Christmas and birthdays, of the first pair of tiny trousers and the dollar watch that

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came with them, and of the first fight he had gotten into because a neighbor boy had spoken slightly of his mother. She lived over again the happy Sunday evenings when they had all sat by the open fire and read aloud, or the father had told of his own experiences as a boy. Oh, she had built such castles and dreamed such dreams for the "best boy in all the world." She had trained and talked and explained and pleaded and urged and helped, and most of all she had believed in the boy with all her heart. She had not been insensible to his weaknesses, but had striven to correct them by word and deed. She could not understand it. It was beyond her and fairly engulfed her in disappointment. Yet she would not forsake him. Oh, no! Now was the time of times he would need her. It would be hard, but she would go with him through fire and water if need be, through shame

and scandal if it came to that. She would not forsake him, not for a second.

Suddenly she sat erect. Had she heard a voice? No, it was just an impulse from within. Then—it came again. She rose from the chair and obeyed its summons. She had ever been a creature of impulse, and why change now? It was an impulse that had led her to discover the hateful racket. Perhaps this impulse would lead her to help the boy.

She quickly put on her hat and slipped out into the black night, whither she did not know. The cool air refreshed her, the dark rested her tired, tear-scorched eyes. She hurried on, and, turning the corner, walked faster and faster, until just ahead of her she saw that the street was brightly lighted by the windows of a store. She crossed over to the unlighted side of the street and hurried on. At the alley way she heard

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voices. It was a gang of excited boys and they were coming straight toward her. She stepped to one side in the shadow of a tree just as they hurried past her; every boy was carrying something in his arms. She turned to watch them, when suddenly from the gang Herbert's figure was clearly outlined against the bright light. At first she was speechless, then indignant, then eager. She sped after them, a wild tumult in her breast. At the corner they paused to look over their spoils, but hardly had they placed the boxes of candy on the ground when she suddenly appeared among them.

She caught Herbert tightly in her arms and cried, "Herbert! Herbert! It's *Mother*."

The rest of the gang stayed just long enough to make sure there was going to be a scene, and then scooted in every direction like so many surprised mice.

Herbert struggled free, but made no attempt to run. He stood before her irresolute, shamefaced, and ill at ease, uncertain just what his next move should be. About him lay dozens of boxes of stolen candy. There was no denying it this time, he was caught. Caught by his mother with the goods!

II

MOTHER TO THE RESCUE

II

MOTHER TO THE RESCUE

"Well," said Herbert defiantly, "what are you doin' here at this time o' night, Mother?" The boy intended to show a brave front, but in spite of himself he felt his lips quiver.

"Tell me about it, Herbert," pleaded his mother, "and then we'll take this stuff all back where you got it."

Herbert looked up surprised. "Take it back? Take it back? Why, Mother, I can't."

"O, yes we can, even if it were all the way to New York. It must go back tonight, and I'm going with you to see that every box is replaced just where you found it, and then—"

"Then?" Herbert looked desperately about for a possible escape.

"And then, my boy, home with Mother."

"I can't!" choked Herbert. "O, I *can't* do it. I'll take the candy back, but I can't go home. I haven't a home any more. I haven't any friends. Everybody's got it in for me. No, I'm going away—anywhere. I hate this town!" He stood defiantly waiting for her next move.

"But you have Mother, my boy, and all I have is yours. Let's hurry! I feel so faint that I'm afraid my strength will give out, Herbert. Come, which way is it?"

She took Herbert by the arm and they slipped back through the dark alleys, across lots, and over back fences, until they came to the storehouse of a wholesale candy company. Here Herbert climbed up on an old shed, and with difficulty crawled

through a broken window into the establishment. To his surprise Mrs. Hudson followed him, for she had determined to see him through to the end. No difficulties counted when she felt that her presence was a support to her boy! When every package had been replaced, Mrs. Hudson spoke, her voice quavering in spite of herself.

"My son, listen to me. I want you to swear to me now that as long as you live you will never steal again. I know this isn't the first time—but there must never, never be another. Oh, what would Father say if he could look in on us here tonight? His only son a *thief*! Promise me, promise me," she cried, "that it is the very last time." Her voice was husky with emotion, both his hands were in hers, and he could feel her quick warm breath on his face.

He never was quite sure what

he said in that moment. A second later he followed her through the window, off the shed, over the fence, and they were again on their way home, Mrs. Hudson holding tight to the boy's arm as she talked. Once inside the house, she turned the bolt, threw off her wraps, and forced the lad into the light.

"We have so much to talk of yet tonight, Herbert. Make it as easy for Mother as you can, for you have nearly killed her today. Begin at the beginning and tell me everything. I can't do anything to help until you do."

In spite of himself he found his glances wandering toward the woodshed door. He was wondering just how much she really knew of his other escapades. He appeared willing to tell all, however, so his mother let him do the talking. He told her in minutest detail of the evening's experience and of how he had been

there once before, but made absolutely no reference to the tennis racket or to his truancy from school. When he had finished, his feelings were pretty badly stirred up and he begged for one more chance to prove himself a man; one more opportunity to regain her trust, promising over and over that he would make good, but his mother was noticeably disappointed.

"Herbert, please don't try to fool me. I know you have not told me nearly all yet. Go on with the rest. I want it *all*."

Herbert looked up at her in amazement.

"Why, Mother, I have told you all—all that I can think of."

"Go to the pantry, my boy, and look behind the door."

The pantry door was next the back entrance to the house. One glance at that stolen racket, and the old desire to be gone seized him. Now

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was his chance to go. He turned the knob hesitatingly when he heard his mother coming. No, he would have it out with her first, and then when she was asleep he could go without any fuss. He thought about the way Dick Templeton ran away in the story he had been reading, and what wonderful luck he had had. In a moment more she came upon him where he stood, tennis racket in hand and a strange light in his eye. She saw again that look of defiance which she had hoped was gone forever.

"Does Mr. Bates at the Y. M. C. A. know that I stole *this*, Mother?" He spoke bitterly.

"I don't know, my boy. But you must take it back and say to him that you have made an awful mistake. I'll go with you if you want me to." She spoke pleadingly, noting his stubborn face.

"O, Mother, I can't do it. I'll

never, never steal again, but I can't take it back. I'm sure Mr. Bates knows I'm a thief from the way he looked at me today."

"Then, Herbert, don't you *see* that you can't ever begin to do the square thing again until you have straightened out absolutely everything? You must first get a clear conscience, and then you can make a fight—you can eat and sleep and smile and grow. It's God's way, my dear, dear boy, and there isn't any other."

It was late when they went to bed, but Herbert had partially agreed to return to school the following day, square himself there, and begin over again. Mrs. Hudson felt encouraged and confident that she would be victorious in the end. But she counted too little on the tremendous influence of the gang.

As Herbert lay watching the shifting rays that filtered through the curtains from the corner arc light,

his whole spirit was in revolt. Open acknowledgment seemed the one impossible thing. How could he stay and face the people who knew? If he only dared to go away! His emotions were in so wild a state of confusion that he could of himself determine nothing, and instead of stealing away as he had planned, he lay there undecided, incapable of choosing his course for himself. Then came a low, familiar whistle from outside. It was the signal of the gang.

He sat suddenly erect and was all attention. Could he be dreaming, or was this evening's candy raid to haunt him as the stealing of Murphy's racket had? As he listened, all the details of the evening's "fun" drifted through his mind. He could see Redhead up in the window of the candy shop loft, he could hear again the whistle that said plain as day—"All's clear, come on up." The

whistle came again. He leapt from his bed and parted the curtains. He saw Redhead's figure disappearing and he whistled in answer. Why he did it he couldn't have told, unless it was that he always whistled when he saw Redhead.

Redhead came back to the fence.

"Come on down, Herb," he said in a hoarse whisper. "I want to talk to you."

Herbert hesitated as he had never done before. Many a night he had slipped down that same rain pipe and later returned to his room by the same route.

"Aw, come on. I want to tell you something. Are you afraid?"

That did the business, and in a second Herbert was emerging from the window preparatory to a descent, dressed only in his pajamas.

"Aw, put your duds on first and get your hat and coat," growled Redhead. "I've got something to tell

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you. And hurry. Gee, but you're slow tonight!"

Herbert had long made a practice of taking his coat and hat to his room for just such emergencies, and he was soon ready.

"Let's get out of this before that copper arrests us for burglars. He's the most suspicious cop I ever saw," said Herbert. "He seems to be watching me all the time. Don't suppose he knows anything, do you?"

"Naw, he's got to arrest somebody now and then to hold his job. But he's safe. I just saw him going into Jake's saloon. Say, what did you get when you got home? Dad everlastingly beat up on me and it made me sore. What right had he to lick me when he didn't know a thing about what had been going on? Said I'd been running around with that gang of 'rough necks' long enough, and the next time he caught me with any of 'em he'd lick me within an

inch of my life. You know the old man's a reg'lar bull-dog when he gets riled up. Wa'd your mother say, Herb?"

Herbert hung his head a bit and was in no hurry to say just what had happened.

"Got caught again, Red. Mother found that tennis racket I hid in the woodshed and she says I've got to take it back to the Y. M. C. A. and give it to Bates tomorrow. We had a regular sob party and I promised to go back to school tomorrow and begin over, but, gee whiz, what's the use!"

"That's just what I say," said Redhead indignantly. "What's the use? A lot of old hens a'peckin' at you all day and bawlin' you out because you don't think Caesar's 'Gallic Wars' is as good fun as a new 'Nick Carter!' Say, Herb, I'm dead tired of the whole show. Let's beat it."

"Beat it?" repeated Herbert.

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"Where to? How could we? I haven't a cent and I'll bet you haven't either."

"You don't need money. We'll bum it to Denver. There's gold mines there, loads of them, where they dig it out in chunks. Everybody's rich and has autos and everything out there. May be we can help the fireman shovel coal and he'll divvy up his lunch. I've heard of 'em doing it. Look at Tom Prell. He's bummed clear 'round the world and back again twice and brought money back with him both times. These bloomin' folks around here think we're just kids and that we ain't ever going to grow up. We're getting to be men, and its time some of those old lollipops woke up to it."

"That's just the trouble," said Herbert. "A fellow needs a little money in his pocket. Mother pulls such a long face when I ask for any that I hate to do it. She says she's saving,

and that's all right—only—I don't want much, but I *need* a little. If you could only earn a little out of school hours, but you can't in this one-horse town!"

"Every time I want a dime I have to ask for it too, like a pup beggin' for sugar. It gets my goat, and I'm not going to do it any longer. It's me for the tall timbers, where I can earn a man's money and be a reg'lar guy."

Herbert had been listening and considering thoughtfully. The opportunity had come that he had wished for so often. Of all places on earth the one he most longed to see was the Colorado Rockies. He would have started and tried to walk it many a time, except that the awful lonesomeness of going into the unknown all alone scared him out. Here was an offer of companionship and—well, it would settle the whole trouble, and he wouldn't have to

face them at school. Mother'd cry, and she'd think he was a coward—but when he came back with a big roll in a few years she'd see he was right. Red kept very quiet while his companion's thoughts raced on. Red wasn't burdened with a scrupulous conscience that had to be fought down, but he knew that Herbert was different. Finally, however, he exclaimed, "O, well, if you want to stay and do the weak sister act you *can*. I'm going to light out."

"I'll go, Redhead," Herbert said suddenly. "But let's get away while we can. If I go at all it's got to be tonight."

"Good! Put her here, old pal!" said Redhead, enthusiastically. "Now we're off. So long, everybody," he said in high spirits as they turned into the alley that led to the freight yards. Two hours later they were shivering in the corner of an empty box car *en route* to Denver, consoling

themselves with wild imaginings of the wonderful things that were to happen to them in the West.

"They'll be tickled to death out there to have us, I know," reassured Redhead. "Only a little while ago I read of how the state was presenting everybody with a hundred and sixty acres of wonderful land, just to get them to settle. They call 'em homesteads. Say, Herb, we'll get two right next to each other and raise Texas steers and buffaloes."

"Yes, but how in blazes are we going to get food for this journey, Red?" asked Herbert anxiously. "It won't be so very long now till breakfast."

"O, never mind that now. What's the matter with you? Kit Carson or old Dan Boone, either one, could go a week without food. It was fellers like them that opened the West to civilization. But we'll get some eats somehow, you just wait and see."

III

OFF TO BE CATTLE KINGS

III

OFF TO BE CATTLE KINGS

Very early Mrs. Hudson discovered that Herbert was gone, and when nine o'clock came and there was no word of him she began to imagine all sorts of wild things. Never before had the idea of his running away come to her mind. At last, trembling with fear of what the answer would be, she telephoned to the high school.

"Mr. Spear, is Herbert at school today?" she said.

"No, Mrs. Hudson. He hasn't been here for a week, as I told you yesterday," replied Mr. Spear.

"He promised me last night that he would come to you the first thing this morning and square himself." She could control herself no longer, and her voice shook with emotion.

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She hung up the receiver and sank, sobbing, into a chair.

"Oh, what shall I do! I hoped so much last night that he was going to do better. He needs a man's hand." When her first burst of grief was past, she decided to go to the Association to see Mr. Bates and tell him everything. It was the hardest task she had ever set herself—to tell some one else that her own boy was a thief. Nevertheless she hurried down town, fearing her courage would ooze away if she delayed because of her swollen face and tear-drenched eyes.

Mr. Bates was very sympathetic. He had realized for some time that the real weakness was in the boy's will. He felt that something must be done to arouse the boy's *own* desire and determination to make a new start, before they could hope for success. Urged by his deep sympathy for the unhappy mother and

his desire to save the boy's life and character from the utter destruction which threatened it, a plan of salvation for Herbert began to form vaguely in his mind.

"I'll get in touch with him today, Mrs. Hudson," he told her reassuringly. "I'm not just sure how, but I'll do it if it can be done. I'm glad you came to me, and I'll do my best to help you."

Bates went out to the door with Mrs. Hudson and started on a still hunt for the lad. He was nowhere to be found, and Bates could get no news of him.

"I'll bet that boy has started for Denver!" he finally said to himself, and went reluctantly to tell the boy's unhappy mother. "The only thing I can do now is to write my friend, Carter, at the Young Men's Christian Association in Denver to be on the lookout for him," he told her, at the same time holding out every

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reasonable hope he could think of to comfort her.

Meantime, the two boys had been rudely wakened from their broken slumber just at daylight by the sliding of the box-car door. In an instant they were all attention. The dirty ill-kempt head of an Irish "bum" was thrust in, and a string of foul expletives launched at them.

"Get out quick, you snipes!" croaked a second unsteady voice. "This ain't no lodging house. If youse want to ride, get out in one of these flat cars. The fresh air'll be better for yuh, anyway."

"Get out yourself!" retorted Red-head angrily. "This is our car and we ain't goin' to have a couple of bums tell us where to get off at."

"O ye ain't, ain't ye?" cried the Irishman. "We'll show ye! Here, Tom, you take spindle shanks and I'll take this redheaded devil. Out they go."

A rough and tumble fight ensued, and the boys were getting the worst of it, when the brakeman put in his appearance. He waved his heavy club threateningly and demanded, "What's going on here?" Then unceremoniously he grabbed the Irishman's leg and with one powerful yank, sent him sprawling. The other half-drunken fellow had found Herbert almost too much for him and was glad to be suddenly free from the clench of the wiry young muscles. It was none too soon, for Herbert was nearly all in. He had not been eating well for fully a month and his sleep had been of a tortured, unrestful kind. Such living and his present empty stomach were not conducive to endurance in a hand-to-hand fight.

Redhead saved the day, with one of the lies that slipped so easily off his tongue. It never occurred to Red to tell the truth when he was in

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trouble, although he often lied himself deeper and deeper in. He put on an injured air, as he said, "They've been trying to make us kids go on a bumming trip with them and we didn't want to. They got us here from Thomstown in the night and we tried to make a break at the first stop, but that blamed door squeaked and woke 'em up. They'd about finished us when you came. Say, mister, if you'll watch 'em a few minutes with that club of yourn, we'll make our get-away."

"Sure I will," the brakeman responded cordially, as he spat on his hand and swung the axe handle threateningly. "I'd like the job. Here's a quarter, kids. You go get a bite to eat and then beat it. I'll take these hogs on down to Center-ville and present 'em to the constable."

Redhead was tugging at Herbert now to get him started, and in ten

seconds they were running at top speed despite their aching muscles.

"Gee! and we're only started," sighed Herbert as they heard the freight pull out of the yards. "I almost wish I was home in bed. I'll bet mother is having waffles for breakfast this minute."

They knocked about that day, and later in the afternoon they crawled into an open barn door in a back alley and were soon sound asleep. Redhead was wakened in the morning by a milkman's cart stopping in the alley below. It was just daylight. He was hungry and thirsty. Instantly his crooked brain suggested an easy means of supplying the demand of his stomach. There was fresh milk in that wagon! When the driver was engaged at a neighboring kitchen door, Redhead helped himself to two big bottles of milk and was back in the safety of the barn long before the milkman returned to

his wagon. When all was safe he wakened Herbert and fed him. Herbert was so accustomed to find food provided when he was hungry that at first it did not occur to him to wonder where it came from. When his hunger was appeased, however, he asked with some hesitation, "Did—did we steal this, Red?" Even Red noticed the loyalty that made Herbert say *we*, and it made him lenient to Herbert's evident wish that he was safe at home again.

On the way back to the railroad yards they met a man carrying two heavy grips. Redhead promptly asked leave to carry the grips for him. This transaction netted them ten cents apiece, and they made a bee line for a shabby white lunch wagon and indulged their appetites in "hamburger and onions."

"It's great to have to shift for yourself, ain't it, Herb?" said Redhead between bites. Somehow there

was a cheer in this honestly earned meal that had been lacking in the stolen food. "I suppose we'll have to live on a good deal less than this sometimes while we are proving up on them homesteads. Perhaps we'll have to eat skunk or prairie dog meat, for all we know. But just think of ten years from now. Say, Colorado must be a long way off. I don't even see a mountain yet. I thought you could see Pike's Peak for a thousand miles."

"So did I," said Herbert, but with less enthusiasm, for somehow most of his dreams of the golden West were fast fading, in spite of Redhead's optimism.

"Say, you ain't sick, are you?" asked Redhead at length. "You look awful pale about the gills."

"No, not exactly," said Herbert, shamefacedly. "I got a pretty sound trouncing from that bum, though, and I'm sort o' dizzy. An' then—I've

been wondering what mother will say when she finds me gone," he added in lowered tones.

"Don't waste any of your time worrying about that end of it, Herb," consoled Redhead. "Just think how proud she'll be of us when we get to be cattle kings one of these days." But even that failed to rouse Herbert's enthusiasm, and they went a long way in silence. Both boys were thinking thoughts that neither would have wanted the other to know.

That night they boarded a freight train that was outward bound in the early morning toward the land of their dreams. They had hopes that at least by the next night they would be able to see a few hundred snow-capped peaks in the distance. But after they had been jerked and jostled all day in the lurching freight train, a tremendous thunder storm broke loose and darkness fell so early that they could see nothing of the

country they passed through. The two adventurers huddled closer together in a corner of the car in a vain attempt to keep warm. They had never been so cold and wretched in all their lives. After awhile they fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

For hours the train rolled on uncertainly. At last it crossed the Kansas line and came into the low rolling hills of Eastern Colorado. Yet the rain continued as they had never before known it to do. The road bed was soggy and in ill repair and every now and then the brakeman hurried forward, lantern in hand, to make an examination, but finding all in good condition, would signal to go ahead. Finally the engineer took heart, and, opening the throttle, let the long train of empties slip faster over the slippery rails. He decided to take his chances as others had before him, so that by the time they came to Fountain Bridge they

were making fast time. And then it happened. They swung on a sharp curve; one car slipped the track, then another and another. The boys were wakened from their restless sleep by the fearful noise and bouncing and jerking. Redhead was the first to think.

"She's off the track, Herb. Jump!" he cried. He slid the heavy door open and disappeared. Herbert was but half awake, yet he knew it was time to act. He did as he had seen his companion do, but he jumped too far. Missing the road bed, he plunged down a steep embankment into a barbed wire fence. He was conscious for a moment of a fearful pain in his right foot—and then he fainted dead away.

The train lumbered on fifty yards further and then came to a stop. Redhead searched the empties for his friend and then went back along the track until he found him unconscious

where he had jumped. He hurried back to the train, and with the ready help of a friendly brakeman, carried Herbert to the caboose, where he was made as comfortable as possible. A dash of cold water soon brought him around and he was able to tell them of his badly sprained ankle, which they bandaged tightly for him.

After hours of delay the train pulled into Denver.

"We must beat it from the railroad yards just the second we stop," said Redhead. "You know the coppers in the big cities are on the lookout for kids that bum into town. If we got picked up like that they'd probably ship us straight back home, and we'd never get to be cattle kings."

Herbert recognized Redhead's wisdom, but that did not make it clear how he was to run fast races with Fate when his foot ached so he could hardly stand upon it. He had visions

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of being left alone. He wasn't so sure of Redhead. He was relieved when Red said,

"O' course I'll help you. You can lean on my shoulder and we'll make tracks mighty quick. Walking on a sprained ankle is the best thing you could do for it anyway. It will soon be well and we'll be getting good jobs, and—"

"What are you going to eat till then, Red?" asked Herbert sheepishly. "I'm so hungry my clothes don't fit. I'm starving, I tell you. I guess I could eat a raw dog."

"Gee, I wish we'd see a runaway, or get a chance to save a nice lady in a fire, or—"

"O, you make me sick!" growled Herbert. "We ain't in a story book. You won't have any luck like that, let me tell you. You'll be blamed lucky if you get a job washing dishes for your meals, or maybe feeding the pigs."

"Now, none of that 'prodigal son' dope, Herb," cried Redhead. "I'd rather feed pigs all my life than go back home."

"Well, you got me to come, Redhead, and don't you forget it. It's up to you to get the provisions. I'll help, of course, when my foot gets well, but what I want now is something to *eat*."

"Looks to me like you needed a wife—or a tailor," laughed Redhead. "Cast your lamps on those clothes of yours. That barbed wire fence sure did embrace you."

They knew that their soiled clothing and dirty unkempt appearance would make it hard to get a job, even if they had not been so hampered by Herbert's accident. Their arrival in Denver was little like their glorious plans, and it was two very crest-fallen faces that watched the buildings of the city of their dreams come into view.

Soon factory buildings and bridges began to appear. In a few moments the train came to a stop, and the boys were in Denver. Red jumped out quickly and helped Herbert to the ground, and in a few moments they were safely out of the freight yards and toiling up the little side street. At every step Herbert feared he could never take another; beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

They passed a little grocery store and Red noticed that the sole attendant was an old lady. They walked on to the corner and Red went back. He refused to tell Herb how he got the bag of cookies and bananas he brought back with him, but Herb was so hungry he did not urge too hard; he hardly cared. Never before had a few stale cookies tasted so good.

"Where are we going to put up tonight, Red?" asked Herbert sourly.

"Where do you think?" replied

Redhead, just as tartly. "At the Brown Palace? We'd have no trouble about a bed if you'd kept your wits about you when you jumped. Now, I don't know what we'll do." There was a little gleam in his eye for a fleeting second as he continued, "I could shift for myself all right, but when you've got an invalid along——"

"Redhead, don't you dare to talk like that!" retorted Herbert. "You know you got me to——"

"Yes, yes, I know," cried Redhead, half ashamed. "We're pards, and I'll stick. What we've got to do is to get a room tonight so that foot can get rested for tomorrow. Then we'll find work."

IV

HARD LUCK ALL AROUND

IV

HARD LUCK ALL AROUND

After walking for some time in a vague search for some place in which to spend the time, Red saw a "For Rent" sign.

"I'm going to use my wits," he said. "If it's a nice, tender sort of woman, I'll give her a hard-luck story and promise to pay tomorrow. If it's a cranky old hatchet-face, I'll just ask where some street is. You sit down here till I come back." He was gone fully twenty minutes, but returned smiling.

"Dead easy, Kid. She'd help us a week and never ask about the rent, but I told her I'd pay tomorrow night. The room's downstairs, too."

"But what if you can't pay?" questioned Herbert, anxiously.

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"I will," promised Redhead, easily. "There's more than one way to kill a cat. But you don't get no more eats till breakfast."

The old lady greeted them kindly. She had had boys of her own. Herbert and Red washed in an old-fashioned china bowl and then Red went out to see what he could find. As he walked up the street the responsibility that had suddenly come to him in the person of disabled Herbert, weighed heavily upon his spirits.

"It wouldn't be so bad if I only had a few dollars," he said to himself, "but I haven't a red."

His interest in self-preservation began to assert itself and he looked eagerly for a suggestion that would lead to funds or something to eat. Three blocks up the street he came to a pawn shop, and stopped to look at the display. While he stood there, two tough-looking customers entered,

each with a heavy robe under his arm, and a few moments later came out laughing and jingling coins in their hands. Red envied them and moved on up the street, thinking. He noted for the first time the big robes in the autos that were parked along the street. Cunning and unscrupulous, his wits began to work. He sought out a dark street and did some investigating. At ten o'clock that night he came out of the same pawn shop with two whole silver dollars in his pocket and hurried to their room.

Herbert was asleep and Red did not wake him to tell him that at least their room rent was assured. He tried to sleep himself, but it was hours before he dozed off. He kept wondering just what he'd do if every imaginable misfortune he could think of should befall them.

He went out early the next morning and hunted for a small grocery

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store, where he could buy some breakfast. On a side street he found one in which an old man was laboriously sweeping up the dirt from yesterday's business.

"You ought to have a young chap to sweep for you in the mornings," said Redhead in a friendly way. "Give me a half dozen sweet rolls and a dime's worth of boiled ham, please."

"That's what I ought," replied the old store keeper, "but I can't get a boy that's honest, but what it costs more than I can pay."

"Why, a fellow could do that work before he goes to his down-town work just as well as not. Say, what'll you pay for that little job? I've got a crippled brother and it keeps me humping to make ends meet. I'd like to do that job for you, Mister. I'd take my pay in groceries."

The store keeper was wrapping

up the ham and thinking to himself:

“ ’Tain’t bad now, but when I have to build a fire mornings, too, it just about tuckers me out. You say you’d take your pay in food stuff? What would such a job be worth?”

Redhead calculated rapidly. “Say, Mister, is there a horse to take care of, too?”

“Yes, one horse.”

“Is there a barn that’s got any place to sleep that’s half civilized?”

“Yes, a good place to sleep.”

“Well, sir, I believe we can do business.” And before Redhead returned with breakfast he had arranged for them to move to the barn. At least a home and grub were now guaranteed. What was his consternation when Herbert flatly refused to leave! His foot was so painful he lay moaning, and, besides, he was completely enveloped in a dismal case of the blues. If ever

there was an unhappy boy in the world it was Herbert Hudson, and consequently he was not responsive to Redhead's cheerful mood.

"Better leave you here a few days, I suppose," said Redhead at length, "but I can do the work at the store any way and when your foot feels better, we can move. For the love of Mike, Kid, hurry and get it well, for it costs like fury to live this way. I'm going down in the big city to-day and see what I can find. You bathe that foot often and rub it. Gee! if we'd have to have a doctor and he'd send you to a hospital, what would we do?"

Herbert thought the same thought all day, each hour looking blacker to him. What ever possessed him to come away from home he didn't know, and yet in all his gloomy thoughts not once did there come a concrete wish to go back. He bathed his foot and rubbed it as best he

could. It had swollen badly and was beginning to discolor about the joint. His eye caught his soiled and ragged trousers and he began to wonder how he was ever to replace them. He noted his soiled underclothing and began to imagine himself on cold snowy winter days with nothing warmer on and plenty of good warm ones at home. So the day wore on very slowly. At noon he finished the remnants of the breakfast, and tried hard to walk about the room, but it was no use, and so by night there was added to his blues and loneliness a great burden of discouragement. What if he had permanently crippled himself?

Just before supper the kindly old lady knocked and brought him a bowl of soup and inquired after his foot; she also asked many questions. He told her that they were orphan boys and that he had been thrown from a wagon and crushed his foot,

that his brother had employment down town and that they had wanted to move nearer to his work to save car fare. The old lady seemed to take it all in, but was privately a bit skeptical.

At dusk Redhead returned, but was very quiet and seemed to be thinking.

"Did you find work?"

"Nope," said Red, "my duds are too old and dirty. Tried all day. Nothing doing. Made two jitneys and bought my dinner with them. That's every cent."

"How are you going to pay the rent?"

"That's easy. Don't ask me any questions and I'll tell you no lies."

"Did you find out about the home-steads?"

"Nope, I didn't. I didn't have time. Could have sold papers, but you can't get them unless they know you. Could 'a' got a job driving a

taxi, but didn't know the streets. Tried to bluff it, wouldn't work. Everywhere I asked for a job they told me I ought to be in school. Studying the dead languages, I suppose! I stood looking into a bakery window at noon, while I picked my teeth to play a joke on my stomach, and a big copper made me move on—just as if my looking at them would spoil the frosting on the cakes. Nearly got a job running an elevator, but couldn't show any recommendation, so I got left. This old town is tame. It's civilized clear to the heart. Why, I didn't even see a cowboy all day, let alone any real Western bad men. There's no gold mines anywhere near here, and the streets are just filled with loafers. That old guy that said, 'Go West, young fellow,' must have been nutty."

A week ran on, with Redhead picking up odd jobs and earning a few

bits of food at the little store. The rent was due—the money all gone. Redhead thought he was the most wretched boy alive and awoke every morning a little more depressed and unhappy. The day before he had begged in one quarter of the city and a lady had threatened to turn him over to the police. What if he should get run in and have to leave Herbert helpless? He made up his mind that he would do something desperate before that should happen.

Finally he induced Herbert to leave the house, and under cover of darkness he helped him to the barn of the grocery store. Each step was pain and torment, but Herbert had almost gotten to where he didn't care how soon the end came. What wouldn't he give to have his own dear mother rub and bandage that swollen foot! Someway she had been in his mind almost constantly the

last three or four days; yet his thoughts were always selfish ones of his own ease and comfort. It had never occurred to him that she might also be thinking of him and yearning for him.

Redhead went downtown in a desperate mood. He must have money by hook or crook, and he proposed to get it by his own wits if his muscle was of no avail. As he wandered the streets, discouraged, his confidence gone, his false ideas all exploded, foot-sore, tired, blue, he evolved a desperate idea. He knew how to drive certain kinds of cars. He would find one he could drive, get in it and take it a block away, park it, and then wait for the owner, tell him he saw a fellow take the car and he knew where the fellow always hung out—he would show him for a tip. It was a bold plan. He tried it and luck smiled upon him. He went into another part of the city

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and tried it again. It worked, but he was sure the man was suspicious. He bought a dozen papers and posed as a newsboy next time, but instead of giving him a tip, the owner grabbed him by the collar and started him to the police station. His wits saved him. He told of the lame brother at home and how he needed the money, and the gentleman, after giving him a severe scare, turned him loose with the threat that if he ever saw him around an auto again he would have him arrested.

Redhead went home only to find Herbert much worse. The pain had crept up his leg to the knee and the leg was very stiff. They must have a doctor, but in order to prevent the possibility of his being sent to a hospital, Red must be able to pay him. He went back to his auto game the next day with a vengeance. The first trial was a success, but the second was a failure. The car be-

longed to a young doctor and he realized quickly that he had been fooled. He was angry, and yet he felt some interest in the boy, and thought that in all probability the lad had been driven to try the trick. He took him kindly by the shoulder, and looking into his eyes said, "Look here, kid, what did you do that for?" Redhead was undecided at first, and then he told how he had a badly crippled brother that had to have money and he could get it in no other way.

"Is the boy in a doctor's care?" asked the physician.

"No," said Redhead, and then an idea flashed into his mind. "Would you go to see him, sir, just once? Maybe that leg will have to come off if it gets much worse."

"Yes, I'll go. Where is he?"

He went to crank his car when a gentleman drove up alongside and got out.

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"Well, doctor, got your car back, eh? I'm glad."

Redhead saw the man, the man saw Redhead, and they recognized each other.

"Some more of your work, eh? Just as I thought. Well, sir, every policeman in this city is looking for you, and you'll get all that is coming to you, believe me."

"That's all right, Mr. Jay. I understand about the case. Forget it," said the Doctor. "Climb in, kid."

It took the doctor only three minutes to make up his mind, once he had seen Herbert and the bad leg.

"It's the hospital for you, my boy, at once, or you'll be a cripple all your life. I'll take you at four. I must make arrangements for you first. Who did you say you were?"

"I'll have him ready, doctor," chimed in Redhead, "and I'd like awfully to do something for you."

"I want you to go along to help," said the doctor as he drove away. "Runaway boys again, I'll bet."

When the doctor had gone, Red sat down to think. He was too much preoccupied and Herbert too miserable to talk.

"So every cop in Denver is looking for me," thought Red. "Well, I'll beat it. I hate to leave him—I won't tell him I'm going. I'll write him a note. I've got enough to get out of town. Perhaps I can get to some ranch somewhere. Herb will be fixed up and they'll send him home. He ought to go home. He's got a mother that cares. I ain't—that's the difference. Wish I'd known as much two weeks ago as I do now. I've done the best I could for Herb. Now I must get out."

He borrowed paper and a pencil from the old store-keeper and went out in the back room to write. In a boy's own way he told his pal they

must part—that he was dead sorry that things hadn't turned out just as they had planned, but that it hadn't been his fault and that he had a job on a ranch and must go at once. Then he closed his letter with a bit of advice—"You'd better tell them who you are, Herb, and let them send you home. Your mother cares for you and will want you back. She will give you another chance. You can tell them I'm well and happy and hope they are the same, and that when I get to be a cattle king I'll come back for a visit, but for now I'm just out West. It's awful when a fellow's dad don't give a whoop for him and always just expects him to be no account. My old man always thought a lot more of his paper and his cigar than he ever did of me or what I was doing. I wasn't square with Mother—I know it now and I'm sorry. If I was going to do it over again I'd try hard to keep square

with her, 'cause she's the best friend
a fellow ever has.

"I'll write you some time, and you
do the same. Good by, old top.
Red."

V

**PLAYING SQUARE WITH
MOTHER**

V

PLAYING SQUARE WITH MOTHER

Mr. Carter, secretary of the Boys' Club of the Denver Association, rose from his desk and passed to the outer room where his assistant was seated.

"I have a letter here, Mr. Wood, from my old friend Bates. You remember he was here last summer. He says two of his lads have disappeared suddenly and he suspects they have started for Denver. One, named Hudson, carries a membership ticket and he thinks he will try to pass it here. Here is a description of both. If you see anything of either of them, report to me at once. This run-away boy business is getting to be epidemic in some of those Eastern towns. I wonder what's wrong."

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Two days later Dr. Cass met Mr. Carter coming out of the Association and he stopped him.

"Say, Carter, I have a case at the hospital that will interest you. I tried to find you the other day, but you were out. I got hold of a young boy that had sprained his ankle badly some two weeks ago, in fact so badly that the ligaments were torn from the joint. It was not given proper care, and the lad came very near losing his leg. He tells me he is an orphan and that he had a brother who has left the city and is working on a ranch. The boy has no money, no friends, and no clothes, besides having a very bad attack of the blues. He utterly refuses to talk about himself. He says his only friend has left him, and I have a hunch they were both runaways."

"I'll bet you have the very lad I'm looking for," exclaimed Mr. Carter. "Take me to him, will

you, Doctor? I've watched the police court and everywhere that they might turn up, but with no success."

They found Herbert asleep on his cot, but he wakened when they came closer. Such a forlorn and suffering countenance Carter hadn't seen in a long time, and there was something about it that appealed to him mightily.

"Sonny," said the doctor, cheerily, "Mr. Carter's business is to help boys that are in trouble. I want you to tell him what you won't tell me. You are never going to feel better till you let some one help you, and, what's more to the point, if you want me to get this foot well you have got to get rid of the load that's on your heart and be more cheerful."

Herbert's eyes had filled with tears and he hung his head. Yet he was determined that they should never know who he was. The disgrace would kill his mother and then, too,

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if he lived at all, he would probably always be a cripple. Silently he made up his mind that he would fight it out alone. He had no name, no friends, no one; he would be an orphan by choice.

Mr. Carter drew up a chair and took the lad's hand. He was sure he had found his boy, but that was only the beginning.

"But you have friends, my boy," he said kindly. "That is why I am here. I had a letter about you not many mornings ago." Herbert was startled. Perhaps the police were after him already. Who else could be writing letters? He could not imagine.

"You know Mr. Bates, don't you, *Herbert?*" he continued, slowly giving the hand a slight pressure. Herbert's face suddenly lighted at the sound of his own name. So overwhelmed was he that he could not speak, but just nodded.

"Yes, sir, I do," he stammered at length. "But he must never know that I am here. He thinks I am a thief."

The tale was out. Mr. Carter bit his lips and thought.

"But he *will* know you are here, lad. I shall telegraph him today." Herbert groaned aloud.

"Then my *mother* will know it, too," he cried.

"I thought you were an orphan lad," said the doctor kindly, a smile on his face.

"O, I am, I am," sobbed Herbert. "I am not worthy of my mother—that's really why I ran away."

"Has the other lad a mother too?" queried the doctor.

Herbert nodded. "Yes, sir, but—she doesn't care."

"Are you sure?" asked Mr. Carter softly. "What makes you think so, Herb?"

"She often told Red she had no faith in him at all," said Herbert.

"And did your mother care for you, Herbert?" pressed Mr. Carter.

"O yes, sir, she did," said Herbert eagerly, and then as proof he related how she had gone back with him to return the candy.

"He'd better rest now," said the doctor to Mr. Carter, "while you and I see what can be done."

"I'll be back to see you in an hour, Herbert. Meanwhile think it over and be ready to tell us what you want us to say to your mother."

Fifteen minutes later a telegram sped eastward over the line to Mr. Bates, reading:

"I have your boys, one in a hospital seriously hurt, the other one yet at large. The crisis has come for Herbert. Wire me your wishes."

When Mr. Bates had received the yellow paper, he sat and stared at it for several minutes. His mind was working hard. He had lost his chance to save the boy when it came

to him that other day. "The crisis has come," he said half aloud. "Now is the time to save Herbert and I'm the one to do it. Lost, he becomes a criminal, a misunderstood, misfit boy. Saved, he becomes a—possibility. It's worth it."

He grabbed his hat and ten moments later knocked at Mr. Tilton's private office, offered a card, and was promptly ushered in.

"Mr. Tilton, I've come this morning to give you a chance to invest in a—well, let's call it a possibility."

Mr. Tilton looked over his glasses at the clean-cut unselfish man before him and a smile broke over his splendid face.

"You always have some sort of an investment for me. What is this one? Money is tight just now. I must have a real first-class investment or I'm not interested. Is it animate or inanimate?"

"It's a boy, Mr. Tilton—a father-

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less, overgrown boy who can be saved and become a tremendous asset to our country, but who, lost, will become a danger to society, will break his mother's heart—"

"What will save such a boy, Bates? Surely not money. What the boy needs is a friend, a man who will interest himself in his interests, who will see his possibilities—"

"That's why I'm here, Mr. Tilton. You are the man, but it will take both you and your money this time. My 'possibility' is in a Denver hospital. The boy who was with him has deserted him; he is gone and we can get no clue to him. In all likelihood he will sink into the depths of crime, and we shall never know. But this boy—I want to go to him. I want to bring him back. I want him to know you. I want you to be his—his Big Brother, if you please. The crisis has come. We must act at once.

"Save the boy and we save also a mother's precious faith in her lad. Lose the boy and all is lost. One hundred dollars will do it. Will you invest, sir?"

Mr. Tilton looked into the determined face just a second, then he reached for his check-book. "You save boys and make men of them, sir," he said. "I save pennies and make dollars of them. I envy you. Go. I'll invest and am only too glad. When you have more such investments come again. Now God speed you."

All the way to Denver Mr. Bates had been planning just what he would say. His only chance lay in his appealing to the boy's loyalty to his mother. He realized that Herbert Hudson's soul had been at war with itself; that there had been a mighty conflict within him to see if "self-mastery" or "gang-influence" was to dictate the actions of the

strapping, overgrown boy. "Will power" was the referee and must declare the winner. "Will power" had not been on the job. Mrs. Hudson had longed to rush to her boy when Mr. Bates brought her the glad tidings that he had been found, but funds were not plentiful and it was decided that she should stay at home to await his coming.

"Herbert, old boy, you are in serious trouble and I have come all the way to help you. I am mightily interested in you, and I think your mother is wonderful. My, but it ought to make you proud to have such a mother! She knows all about it, Herb. I went and told her before I started, and I told her that if you were worth the saving I would bring you home. My lad, even through those awful days of uncertainty, when it has seemed as if she would go mad, she still believed in you. She has never given you up for an instant and she is

ready and eager now to welcome you back.

"You think you have had a terrible experience, but yours, in a way, has been an adventure, while hers has been a torture. And yet she trusts her boy. We could have put the matter in the hands of the police—about the candy and the racket, I mean—but, Herbert, we didn't want to until I had had a chance to talk with you. I didn't want to see you spend the best part of your boyhood in a school of correction, without first seeing what could be done. Now tell me all about it from the very beginning, if you feel strong enough."

So there in that far-away city a boy's heart opened and he told the old story of how he had gotten into a bad crowd—a crowd of misunderstood boys whose whole energy had been misdirected and wasted for the want of leadership or of some one to care. He told how they had taken

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to spending their evenings on the street, to "taking" all sorts of little things that were everywhere easy to get, then bigger things, until the gang had begun to steal in an organized way. Then came the tennis racket and many other things, until it had all worked on his mind to a terrible degree. He became suspicious of every one, and couldn't keep his mind on his studies. Trouble with the teachers had followed.

He couldn't eat, he couldn't sleep, or even play ball, because every time he would release his mind it would go back to the things that he had stolen. He had come to believe that he couldn't resist temptation, and had lost all faith in himself. He was so unhappy that he almost wanted to die. He poured out his boy heart and pleaded for just one chance to make good.

"But you can't make good, Herb, until you straighten every crooked

act. There is no use trying. Your conscience will never give you peace. Why didn't you come to me, Herbert, and let me help you when things began to go wrong?"

"I just couldn't do it. I'd rather have died."

"Why?"

"Why, because I knew you *believed* in me. And I couldn't tell Mother because I knew she believed in me and thought me good and true. O, I know what I owe her! I know she is a brick! I wanted to tell her that night I left, but some way I couldn't see how to get started right again."

"I'll tell you why, Herb. Nothing can help any of us until we, ourselves, *will* and determine that we are going to do better. It's will power you need, my boy, and it's the only thing that ever will save you. To be a man, a boy must *will* with all of his heart and mind and soul to be a

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man, and the only organ of his will is directed muscle. You are far from being in good trim physically, and you know it. That is one reason why your will power is weak.

"Herb, that's why it's so bad for boys to smoke cigarettes. It destroys their muscle tone, and when their muscle tone is gone they are ships on the rough sea of life without rudders, autos going full speed without steering gear; because of this they become not only worthless, but dangerous, and so they are removed from society and placed in schools of correction. But that means shame—shame to mother, shame to—"

"Could I have one more chance, couldn't you trust me once more?"

"Herbert, I'm willing to give you one more chance on condition that you personally return every stolen article; that you square yourself at school and make good in every study; that you get back to the gym regu-

larly and train that body and mind to obey your will. Herb, the only reason I offer you this chance is because I *believe in you.*" And Mr. Bates stretched out his hand.

Herbert clasped the hand and said between clenched teeth, "I *will* make good!"

Then, suddenly, the boy burst into tears and wept hysterically. "Mother, Mother, Mother," was his cry. And so, though Dr. Cass had said he should rest quietly at the hospital for some time, he now decided that a dose of home and mother would put the boy on his feet, both physically and spiritually, quicker than anything else.

It was a very pale, thin, and repentant boy who was folded to his mother's heart, and there were but few words between them.

"Another—c h a n c e?" whispered Herbert, and, "Always, my boy, always," replied his mother.

Through the influence of Mr. Tilton, the papers had nothing to say of the episode. He did not propose to run the danger of having his last and best investment spoiled by ugly scareheads. At his suggestion, the first thing Herbert did was to begin the squaring process. One by one, he returned things as he found strength and courage to do so, and when the last article had been restored, he went to the school principal and squared himself there, having been encouraged and even urged to do that last and hardest thing by Mr. Tilton himself. The latter agreed to take Herbert on his office force until he should again find himself and until the opening of a new term of school.

"You'll do me a better service, lad," Mr. Tilton had said, "and you can carry your head higher if you know you have adjusted your mistakes to the best of your ability."

When Herbert came home to dinner he was smiling, and his mother rejoiced inwardly, for it was the first smile since that awful night that he had taken the candy.

"Mother, it was the hardest thing I ever did in my life, but I have returned everything and squared myself with everybody. Tomorrow I'm to go to work in Mr. Tilton's office, and things will be easier if I can be near him. He seems to know just how a fellow feels, and he is going to be my Big Brother."

The next few months saw Herbert grow wonderfully under the tactful suggestions and personal interest of his newly found friend. Many times Mr. Tilton was puzzled to know how best to handle the boy; several times he felt that after all the experiment was a failure, only to regain confidence as he watched the boy's struggle for mastery of a simple act or word. He well realized that the

fight was still on, but at the same time he was confident that the turbulent spirit was slowly coming under control, and he grew more pleased every day over the investment of time and personality that he was putting into the boy.

"It beats making dollars all hollow," he confided to Mr. Bates one day when arrangements were finally made for the boy to go back to school.

One morning some weeks later, his mother said, "Herbert, will you stop at the store for me on your way to school?"

"Sure, mother. What do you want?"

"Just pay our account." She handed him a five dollar bill.

The grocer took it, opened the cash register and handed him back a five, and a one, and some small change. Herbert looked at it, and in an instant realized what had happened. Just then he seemed to hear

a whisper within, "Gee! Just think! Five dollars all for you and no one will know the difference." He slipped the money in his pocket and started toward the door. Just then Mr. Bates passed on his bicycle. Suddenly a sentence flashed into Herbert's mind—"Herb, the only reason I give you this chance is because I believe in you." He turned abruptly and walked back.

"You gave me too much change, Mr. Smith. I gave you only a five."

Mr. Smith whistled softly—"Jiminy! I nearly made a thief of that boy."

At times it seemed to Herbert that the devil had declared war on him for certain. He never had had so many temptations to steal in his life as he did those days. Everywhere careless people left things in his way; several times he came so near failing that it scared him, but his returning

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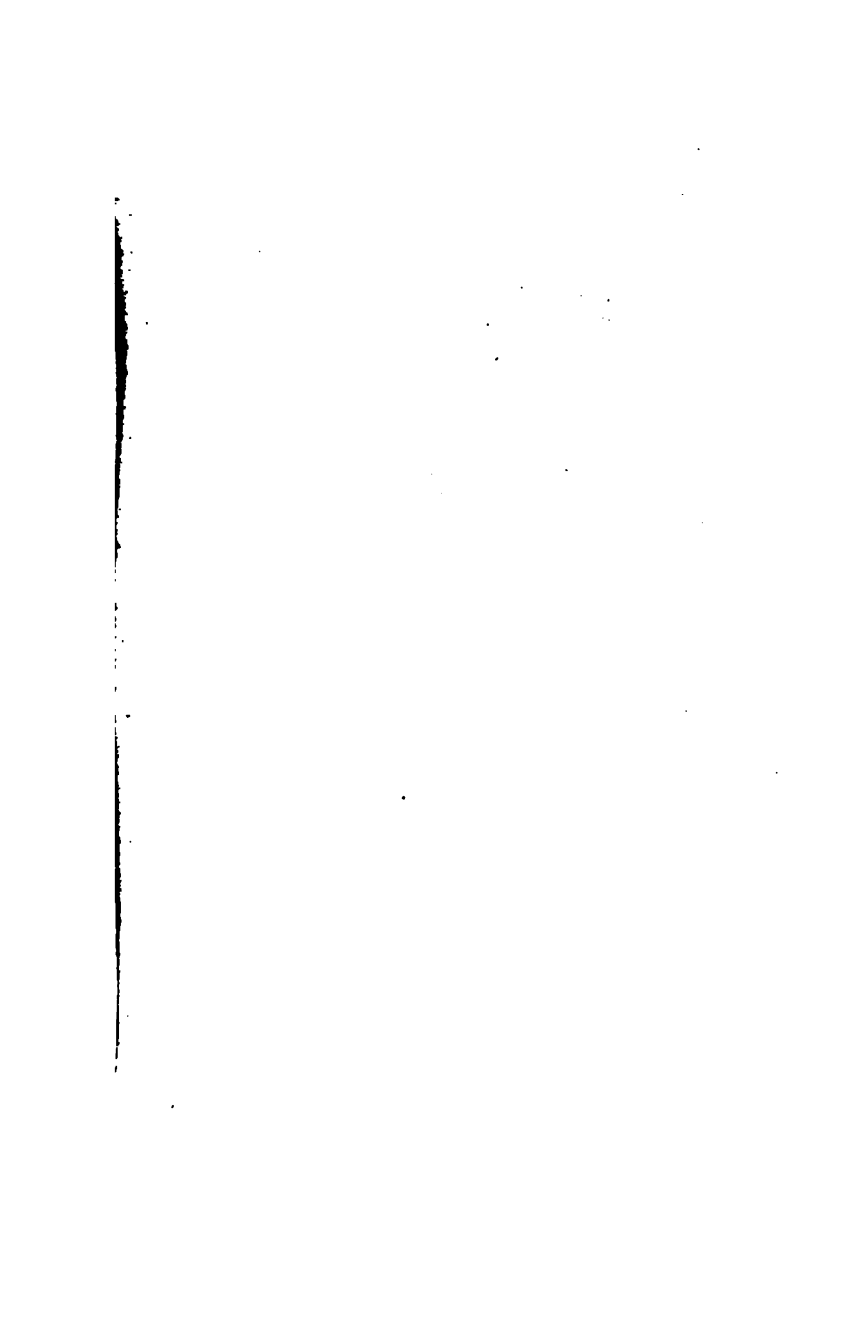
the grocer's money had helped his will.

Then came a more severe test. He had received 68 in a German examination, a below passing mark, and according to his compact with Mr. Bates this would mean double work, for he would have to make good—there were to be no exceptions. At the close of the class the teacher read the grades aloud and when she came to Herbert's, for some reason she read it 86 per cent. "That was a mistake in copying on her part," reasoned a voice within him. "Let it go and don't tell a soul. No one will ever know the difference. You have the paper, she has the grade, and it will be an awful big job to take that German over." Herbert listened and it was not until school was out in the afternoon that he found courage to explain to her that she had made a mistake.

"Look here, Herbert Hudson," said

the teacher, "not one boy in fifty would have done the thing you have just done. I'll give you another examination on the same work, and a week of careful study will put you through. I'll be glad to help you after-school if you'd like to have me."

Herbert went away rejoicing, and he whistled in spite of himself. "Herb, I give you this chance because I believe in you," he said half aloud. "I'll make good or bust. I've just *got* to, for my Big Brother—and Mother—and the Association that saved me."



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